

# Secret Copy Of 'Destroyed' TV Film On Russia

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**A**N extraordinary interview with young Russian dissenters filmed by I.T.V. a year ago and since officially destroyed, still exists. It is fast leading to a diplomatic and television mystery.

Russian officials in London were outraged when the item was shown in "This Week" on November 17. They have been claiming that the negative and all prints have been destroyed at their demand.

The fact that destruction was ordered, and officially took place, is not denied. The motives for this have brought contradictory statements and at least one speculation worthy of a John le Carré spy novel. But a clandestine copy of the film exists.

The film was shot by John Morgan and a "This Week" team when in Moscow to prepare an item on university students. They were approached by a Russian journalist and two young writers who said they wanted to tell the West what was wrong with the Soviet system.

## Protests ignored

The writers brushed aside protestations that they would be endangering themselves and elected to be interviewed in full face by a lakeside, 20 miles from the city. The journalist more prudently chose to be filmed in silhouette inside a car.

The material was smuggled back to Britain and assembled. When it was shown it aroused enormous interest and transcripts were published in *Encounter* and the *Washington Post*.

The Russians were furious and cancelled other Russian projects

being planned by Rediffusion, the company then responsible for "This Week."

Later—accounts vary from next morning to six months on—Mr. John McMillan, Rediffusion's general manager, ordered the negative and all copies to be burned. One explanation is that he did this at the request of other I.T.V. companies who feared they would get no further co-operation from Russia.

## Another view

Another view is that Mr. McMillan acted to protect the three dissenters: if the film didn't exist it could never be used against them. Mr. Christopher Rowley, of Rediffusion's programme board, says: "I remember John saying, 'We can't have these three chaps on our conscience.'"

Mr. McMillan, now head of I.T.V. sport, insists the decision was a purely administrative one. No television company has archive space for the hundreds of programmes it amasses each year. The greater proportion has to be scrapped.

"There was no pressure from the Russians, though I did receive some very unpleasant cables."

"The Soviet Embassy knew the programme was going out."

The most bizarre explanation is that M.I.6, the counter-espionage agency, intervened. It is said M.I.6 alleged one of the dissenters was a K.G.B. agent "planted" to give misleading encouragement to the West.